



As the President of the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut, I am contacting you concerning HB 6606 **AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF CERTAIN POLYSTYRENE PRODUCTS**

We are providing information to give you some understanding of the impact that prohibiting styrofoam trays will have on school food service programs throughout the state. The past few years have been extremely challenging for School Nutrition (SN) professionals. We have overcome and adapted to everything from remote meal service to meals at no charge for children across Connecticut and back to paid meals. Recent legislative actions mean we will be changing again, back to school meals for all.

We are thrilled to be able to provide meals for all students and we remain focused on doing what we do best, serving children nutritious meals at no cost to them. But the reality is that SN professionals have managed staffing shortages, surging prices for food and materials and supply chain disruptions on a daily basis. SN professionals have had extreme difficulty getting any products- styrofoam or otherwise- consistently.

A February 2023 SNACT survey indicates that many districts made the transition away from styrofoam trays despite the pandemic and others have continued as best they could given the uncertainty surrounding supplies. We can not emphasize enough the supply chain interruptions and shortages that continue to impact districts.

Of the districts that have not transitioned from foam trays, many indicated that they expect to do so within the next few years. All indicate that transitioning is expensive and more costly to maintain.

Reusable trays, as an alternative to disposables, are not always an option. Many Connecticut schools do not have the adequate amount of space and/or utility resources that are required to have stations set up for tray washing. Even in districts where machines are available, staffing shortages and increased demand have made reusable trays difficult to use.

Child nutrition programs are the first line of defense against hunger for many of the children in our state. Unfunded mandates that impact our programs - which have shown themselves to be critical to the well being of so many children- without the flexibility that has been crucial to

operating over these past few years or additional financial support to underwrite the higher costs, will only add to the pressure our programs are under. Many school districts have already made inroads into reducing the use of polystyrene products over the past few years and will continue to do so.

Please take these concerns into consideration as you discuss these bills and ensure that the language does not adversely affect Connecticut's SN programs. We urge you to assist our programs in feeding children in Connecticut.

Sincerely,
Erin Perpetua
President, School Nutrition Association of Connecticut
Food Service Director, Norwich Public Schools